

Grant Writing Basics



- **How do we go about finding organizations and other institutions that provide grant opportunities for libraries like ours?**
- **How does this additional funding “fit” into our regular budget?**
- **Once we locate a possible funding source, how do we go about writing the actual grant?**

In the **Fund-Raising Trustee Fact Sheet** we learned that there are many alternatives and options available for trustees and staff to research in order to best meet their specific local needs. Suppose your funding alternative/choice for an upcoming project is a grant. All that the granting institution requires is filling out the application with some description and necessary figures, right? Or is it that “simple”? Library staff is usually very much involved in the actual writing of the application with guidance from you, the trustee, since in most cases you are responsible for the approval of any expenditure or other financial commitments. You also play a key role in planning for future library services and programs. Here are some points to consider before, during, and after the pursuit of grant funding:

- As you and the staff are listening to the needs of your community, be sure to organize the ideas for programs and services into a plan that will serve as a blueprint. This blueprint will help to identify not only the delivery methods for addressing the services and programs but also serve as an excellent tool to help support any grant funding pursuits.
- A majority of the financial support to sustain the local library services and some of the programs should come from your local funding source (e.g. village, city or county) but we know that at times there are not enough local financial resources to initially fund a new project or program. In that case it might be time to seek grant funding, but be sure to include an amount of possible grant monies in your library budget so that if the library is awarded a grant, you will be able to accept the monies as part of your budget.
- Don’t be afraid to look under all sorts of possible funding “rocks.” There are many businesses (local and nationwide), organizations, foundations, government entities, and other institutions that provide grants in different sizes to meet anyone’s different needs.
- Once you find a grant possibility, ask lots, lots, and lots of questions about the grant application process. Don’t make any assumptions, whether you know the individuals in the organization or not. Each grant application is different.
- Follow all the directions as required. Show detail, detail, detail throughout the grant application. Imagine you are describing this project to someone that has no knowledge about your library and community. It is time to tell your story.

- Clearly explain the purpose for the grant project. For example, who is it intended for? Why is the library proposing this project? How did you come up with this need? Do you have any statistics and/or testimonials to help support the need?
- Be sure to include a very detailed budget for all expenses involved in the grant project. Be sure to include pricing for materials and services that is not the sale price. The library has to be accountable for all costs and funding involved in this grant.
- Compose a readable document. Do the sentences flow well? Does one idea connect to another?
- Submit a preliminary grant application if possible. If not possible have another individual or two that hasn't been involved in the writing process take a look at the grant application. The individual might ask some good questions that need more detailed information to help strengthen the grant application.

******Chat for Continuing Education Credits******

Questions to discuss at a regular Library Board meeting about Grants and Grant Writing activities. (Each board member participating can earn 1 hour of continuing education credits for Board Certification.):

- What are some projects and/or programs that we have thought about implementing but haven't due to lack of funding? How can we seek grant funds for projects and/or programs that we have been considering for our community? Who could partner with us and how? How do we initiate collaboration?
- How would we sustain a grant project in our regular budget after it has been funded?

This gives me a good start but where else can I look for additional information?

(Please note that all books and videotapes are available for request by library staff and/or library trustees from the Nebraska Library Commission. Some regional library system office libraries might also have some of the sources available too.)

- *Big Book of Library Grant Money*, by American Library Association. 2007.
- *Getting Funded: The Complete Guide to Writing Grant Proposals* by Mary S. Hall, Portland State University, Extended Studies, Continuing Education Press, 2003.
- *Getting Grants in Your Community* by Sally Gardner Reed, FOLUSA, 2005.
- *Nebraska Foundation Directory* by Junior League of Omaha.
- Don't forget to contact your **local regional library system office** or the **Nebraska Library Commission** for additional information. Check this website for regional library systems contact information: <http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/system/> or contact Richard Miller, Library Development Director via email: richard.miller@nebraska.gov or Laura Johnson, Continuing Education Coordinator via email: laura.johnson@nebraska.gov or via phone: 1-800-307-2665; 402-471-2045 at the Commission.

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